The Henry M. Jackson Memorial Lecture

James H. Billington

VIII

THE HENRY M. JACKSON MEMORIAL LECTURE

James H. Billington

The Nature of the Russian Transformation: The Search for Legitimacy in a Time of Troubles

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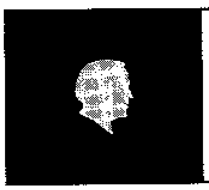
The Henry M. Jackson Foundation was established in 1983 following the death of its namesake. A non-profit, charitable organization, the Foundation supports educational programs related to fields in which Senator Jackson played a major leadership role. These include international affairs; public service; the environment and natural resources; and human rights.



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The Henry M. Jackson Memorial Lecture Series

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Dr. James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress, is a highly esteemed author, historian and educator. Prior to his appointment as Librarian of Congress, Dr. Billington was director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., and is the founder of the Wilson Quarterly.

Dr. Billington is the author of *The Icon and the Axe*, *Fire in the Minds of Men* and *Russia Transformed: Breakthrough to Hope*.

In 1988 Dr. Billington accompanied President and Mrs. Reagan to the U.S.-Soviet Summit in Moscow. He also was a member of both the House and Senate leadership delegations to Ukraine, Russia, Siberia and Mongolia.

Dr. Billington holds 21 honorary degrees. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, a commander of the Order of Arts and Letters of France, and a recipient of the Knight Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit by the Federal Republic of Germany.

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INTRODUCTION

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Helen Hardin Jackson

Good evening. I'm Helen Jackson, Chairman of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation. On behalf of the Foundation, it is my pleasure to welcome all of you this evening to the Henry M. Jackson Memorial Lecture. This year, we are very fortunate to have Dr. James Billington with us to deliver what is the eighth in a series of distinguished lectures.

Dr. Billington has long been one of our country's foremost scholars and thinkers. Sworn in as the Librarian of Congress in 1987, he is the 13th distinguished educator and author to hold that influential position since the Library was established in 1800. Dr. Billington came to the Library from the highly respected Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., where he served as director for 14 years.

Dr. Billington is a sought-after expert in the field of Russian affairs, and is known for his thoughtful, probing discussions of the deeper, spiritual concerns that have moved the Russian people for centuries. He is the author of a celebrated and enduring history of Russia, *The Icon and the Axe*, as well as *Fire in the Minds of Men* and the recent *Russia Transformed: Breakthrough to Hope*. James Billington is a popular presence on numerous educational and network television programs, and has accompanied a number of congressional delegations to the former USSR. He accompanied President Reagan to the U.S.-Soviet Summit in Moscow in 1988 and, in August 1995, led a bipartisan Senate delegation to Siberia and Mongolia.

Dr. Billington has been a leading figure in the academic world, first at Harvard University's Russian Research Center, and then on the faculty of Princeton University, where he served for a decade as a professor of history. He has also been a long-time member of the editorial advisory boards of *Foreign Affairs* and *Theology Today*.

It was during his role as Director of the Woodrow Wilson Center, in the 1970s and early 1980s, when my husband Scoop began working closely with Jim and developed a warm relationship based on many shared views and assumptions about the Soviet Union and the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Scoop thought very highly of Jim and often sought his counsel and advice regarding Russian affairs. He valued his pragmatic

approach to foreign policy as well as his in-depth understanding of the Russian people and their leaders. Under Jim's leadership at the Woodrow Wilson Center, the Center established eight new programs, beginning with the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies in 1974. He also founded the highly respected *Wilson Quarterly* during that era.

Jim Billington's insights into Russia, and his ability to express them in a way that generations of students of Russia can understand, have earned him a loyal following. We are very lucky and honored indeed to have Jim with us tonight.

The Henry M. Jackson Foundation, along with the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, is pleased to sponsor tonight's lecture, which will be published as part of our Jackson Memorial Lecture Series.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the Librarian of Congress, Dr. James Billington.

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Helen H. Jackson, wife of the late Senator Henry M. Jackson, is Chairman of the Jackson Foundation.

ADDRESS

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James H. Billington

Nothing produces deeper hostility in human relationships than the feeling that you are simultaneously being humiliated and ignored by someone you feel close to. The worst crimes of passion between individuals arise out of unrequited love. Divisions classically become most ineradicable when a race or group defines itself by simultaneously insulting and patronizing another. No wars are more bitter than civil wars.

Nothing would probably surprise most Americans more than the five propositions I want to put before you today: (1) America is now the model that most Russians seek to emulate; (2) America is, at the same time, widely perceived in Russia today as having arrogated to itself the master role in an essentially master-slave relationship with Russia; (3) the compensating gestures that we sincerely make to reassure them of our friendship serve largely to deepen their over-all sense of being humiliated and patronized.

It might not be important to linger over these three disturbing matters if it were not for two other factors about Russia that are also not currently on the American radar screen: (4) There is a real risk that Russia could produce in the next few years an authoritarian regime with many fascistic features that could lead, in significant parts of the former Soviet Union, to the kind of explosive violence we have seen in Yugoslavia; and (5) there is, at the same time, an extraordinary opportunity that Russia could become a major ally and trading partner with America in a far more intimate and mutually profitable way than anyone currently seems to think possible.

None of these propositions, of course, is part of what passes for conventional wisdom in America today – which is, more or less, that Russia is likely to bumble on without being either a real menace or a real partner. Russia is seen as basically a third-world economy that will take many decades to be stable enough for long-term investment. Our only real concern is thought to be preventing their export of dangerous weapons to other unfriendly states; and the only real story worth reporting is who is doing what to whom in the Kremlin.

Rarely stated but deeply shaping this conventional wisdom is the unspoken consensus among major geopolitical thinkers that Russia is an inherently authoritarian country anyhow – because of something that happened under either the Mongols or Ivan the Terrible, or perhaps because of some unfortunate genetic flaw.

The most sophisticated new attempt at a post-Cold War geopolitical view of the world, Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, views Russia's Orthodox Christian civilization as one of those that is inherently predisposed to hostility with the West, along with the Muslim world and Confucian-based East Asia. Those of us who argue that Russia is essentially part of the European world that may even contain great potential for good are generally either ignored or dismissed as romantic Russophiles.

The fact that none of the five propositions I have outlined is part of the conventional wisdom in America today should – I would perversely contend – make them at least worthy of consideration, precisely because the conventional wisdom about Russia has been so consistently wrong in the past. The controlling elements of the thinking class in the West basically believed that Russia was progressive under Lenin and Stalin, that the Soviet system would more or less last forever under their heirs, and that Russia now is likely to bumble along on the back burner of geopolitics and not merit much attention.

It is precisely geopolitics, however, that should make it imperative that Russia be taken more seriously today. America has fought five wars in the 20th century — all basically to prevent authoritarian power from (a) consolidating power over the Eurasian heartland, the dominant land mass of the planet, and thus (b) marginalizing the free and entrepreneurial societies in North America and on the maritime periphery of Eurasia. If a centralized authoritarian state were to replace Russia's present fumbling experiment at democracy and a market economy, democratic politics and market-oriented economies of America and the G-7 nations might well suffer more than almost anyone currently thinks possible.

The first likely result of an authoritarian nationalist regime in Russia would be the immediate radicalization of some, if not most, of the new, presently moderate Islamic states that have been carved out of the southern part of what used to be the U.S.S.R. They would move from their present approximation of the Turkish model to some kind of variant of the Iranian or, more probably, Iraqi model. This could radically destabilize the balance of power in the Middle East and create a far larger cohort of hostile states there. Meanwhile, the continuing growth of power and self-confidence of China will almost certainly lead to their increased involvement in Siberia. The Chinese have irredentist

claims there as well as more than 3 million guest workers in Siberia, which has a population of only 12 million Russians.

The probability that the authority of either radical Islam or Communist China will grow at the expense of Russia in the heart of Eurasia should put the strengthening of a democratic Russia on the front burner of Western policy. Whether a neo-authoritarian Russia ends up in conflict with or in subordination to China or radical Islam, the result would be disastrous for the West.

But there is a positive reason for giving higher priority to Russia in our foreign policy. The great interior heartland of Russia still controls, by far, the world's largest and most varied supply of unused natural resources. It is quite incomprehensible that the raw geopolitical importance of the world's last frontier in interior Russia is not taken more seriously by either the analysts of our economy or the prophets of our geopolitics. Both groups seem more interested these days in dealing with genuinely authoritarian police states in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan.

If we are to take seriously the five propositions I set forth at the beginning, we should ask two tough questions of each: What is the main argument against each proposition? And how, if at all, can we in the outside world play a constructive role?

(1) There are two main arguments against the proposition that the USA is Russia's main model: First, Russian history is so totally different from America's; and second, Russians have been nurtured for most of this century on anti-Americanism. But psychologically, Russians throughout history have always tended to use their very different current Western adversary as a secret model for emulation. They took their religion and art from Byzantium in the 10th and 11th centuries, their first modern government structures from the Swedes in the early 18th century, and their forms of economic organization from the Germans in the early 20th century 6 all after or during prolonged combat with those nations.

America has long been Russia's covert model and has now become its overt model. The USA is quite simply the closest parallel and most successful example of what the post-Communist leaders are trying to create: a continent-wide federal democracy and market economy in resource-rich, multi-cultural, largely open expanses on the periphery of European civilization.

(2) The main argument against the suggestion that Russians are nevertheless developing an increasingly negative image of America today is that this has not clearly shown up either in the polling data or in the elite dialogue between Russian and American leaders. The hard fact is that polling data does not reveal the deep interior feelings of

Russians, who have a tendency to put up with humiliations for a long period of time and then suddenly to explode with resentment and hostility which surprise even themselves. Americans simply have no idea of the extent to which ordinary Russians have suffered over the years and feel confused and humiliated now. People with deep, impacted resentments have an explosive potential that is unlikely to be easily measured by superficial and overrated questionnaire techniques.

The leadership groups with which Americans do have contact are often frighteningly dependent on outside reassurance. They are unlikely to directly confront American and other Western leaders with the smoldering hostility that exists inside their own people and even themselves. The Russian leaders that American leaders have tended to feel most comfortable with – Gorbachev, Chernomyrdin, Chubais – often have very little popularity or even legitimacy in the eyes of most Russians. None of these three came to high power through elections; all are out of power now. The camaraderie and toasts offered by Russians seeking to gain short-term economic and political advantage from their American contacts are no more reliable indicators of the long-term direction of mass politics in Russia than was the friendliness of the Shah to the American elite in the mid-1970s.

(3) The main argument against the proposition that our compensating gestures of friendship are seen as patronizing is provided by the undoubted fact that individual Russians and small groups are usually genuinely fond of, and grateful for, the particular things that their American contacts do.

But America as a nation is doing very little. Russians believe that, in overthrowing Communism themselves and repudiating, in effect, 80 years of their own history and self-deception, they have accomplished something rather remarkable. They use the word *podvig* or "heroic deed" to describe their "something big." They have accepted as their basic model their erstwhile Cold War enemy, the United States, and they like the sense of openness and passion for extroverted bigness which they have generally admired in Americans and found lacking in Europeans.

If they see themselves as having done something big, they see America as having done a lot of "small deeds," *malye dela*. Russians are instinctively inclined to believe that people who talk big but do little are somehow conspiring eventually to do something profoundly hostile. For a large country without natural borders and with ethnic hostilities on almost every border region, this pattern of Western behavior is seen as basically reflecting a desire to carve up Russia. When leading geopoliticians in America publicly suggest further political subdivisions in a Russia that has already released fifteen ethnic republics, Russians find new plausibility to the old propaganda that "certain circles" are

secretly conspiring to destroy not just Communism as an ideology, and the Soviet Union as an empire, but also Russia as a nation.

The little deeds that America has so far performed simply have not yet been seen as serious by ordinary Russians. Thinking Russians are increasingly fitting American behavior into their classic image of a Western foreign foe using small gestures to mask a big hostility.

(4) There are two powerful arguments against assuming that there is any real danger of an authoritarian dictatorship in Russia: (a) A whole new political generation has arisen that is profoundly hostile to Russia's authoritarian tradition, and (b) Russians are fatigued with social violence in the name of some remote goals or revolutionary change that has plagued so much of their past.

The short-term difficulty is, however, that this very sense that something profoundly new is coming into being has produced a state of escalating panic, not only among the large numbers of people who profited from the Soviet power structure and have felt disoriented since, but also among even larger numbers of ordinary people who are bitterly resentful at the conspicuous consumption, hedonism, and extreme inequalities that have been produced by the peculiar form that early capitalism has taken in Russia.

Although there is no well organized fascist movement in Russia, the *de facto* Red/Brown alliance between old Communists and new ultra-nationalists dominates the Russian parliament and increasingly influences the entire rhetoric of mass politics. The Jackson Foundation is to be commended for being one of the few foreign organizations supporting human rights groups in Russia that are following and opposing this trend. In the absence of organized political parties to back up the reform impulses of the new Russian generation, the Communist party remains the only nationally organized party, and an extreme nationalism bordering on fascism, the only ideology with wide national appeal.

The early, crude attempt by the extreme nationalist Zhirinovsky to recreate Islam and the West as external enemies did not entirely succeed, nor did the attempt to work out hostilities by crushing the Chechens. But these may not be the last forms that either authoritarianism or inter-ethnic violence will take on the territory of the former Soviet Union. Almost any further drift into authoritarian nationalism by Russia will likely lead to some of the kinds of violence among groups with long historical resentments of the kind that we have seen in Yugoslavia.

The new law restricting religions with foreign connections in Russia represents a major victory for the Red/Brown anti-democratic coalition. The attempt to destroy the growing pluralism of religious

belief by, in effect, reinstituting a reactionary version of Russian Orthodoxy as a virtual state religion is both a concession of political weakness on the part of the democratic reformers who were unable to prevent it and, at the same time, a boon for the authoritarian nationalists by providing them with a cloak of national religious legitimacy that they have not yet had. Finally, the eastward expansion of NATO lends, for the first time, a measure of credibility to the Russian nationalist argument that the West does, indeed, view Russia more as a potential enemy than as a serious partner.

(5) The major argument against seeing in Russia a land of vast opportunity arises precisely from an awareness of the political risks and dangers just alluded to. One could also argue against the likelihood that democracy will ever work in Russia by reflecting on the eventual outcome of previous times of troubles in Russian history.

In the past, Russia has always tended, after a period of chaos and failed reform, to produce an authoritarianism that proves even worse than the one which led to the crisis in the first place. So there is every reason, it can be plausibly argued, to assume that Russia will end up with some form of authoritarianism that will be more menacing and unpleasant than the more-or-less stable spectacle of Communism in decline, but in relative stability with the outside world, under Gorbachev.

However, just as Soviet totalitarianism was unlike previous monarchies, so Russia's present post-totalitarian situation differs profoundly from all past Russian times of troubles. First and foremost, Russia has no real external enemy, let alone foreign invaders. Everyone of consequence in the world, except for the more radical Middle Eastern regimes and probably the Chinese Communist leadership, wishes the Russian experiment in democracy and market economy to succeed. Second, the younger generation in Russia has a totally different vision of themselves and their own country's destiny than has ever been possible before, thanks to widespread education and modern means of communication. Third, the framework has been created for a new democratic legitimacy based on electoral choice, even if political parties and the division of power are not yet functioning well at the national level. Fourth, the fundamental economic basis for long-range economic growth has also been created by a largely successful privatization of most of the economy, except for agriculture and a few major monopolies.

What is missing, politically, is the effective rule of law; socially, the development and empowerment of a non-governmental civil society; economically, the major capital investment needed to make a free economy prosperous by jump-starting the development of Russia's enormous natural and human resources.

It is precisely in these areas that America has the experience and

resources to be of enormous help to the Russians. And it is precisely because we are the model for Russians in their current transformative stage of development that we face both the opportunity of a love affair and the dangers of unrequited love if we prolong our present irresolution as to whether or not to do anything of true significance with the Russians. By now, they have sustained their reform path for more than a decade since it was launched under Gorbachev; but the unpleasant fact is that nothing America has yet done has signaled to the Russian people that we even notice them any more.

For people who have endured as much national humiliation, social confusion, and overall decline in living standards as the Russians have, the likelihood of some irrational authoritarian turn is greater than it might seem. The Red/Brown opposition realizes that time is not on their side and that, if there is not an authoritarian reversal soon, they will face provincial governors and other young figures who are rebuilding the economy and producing a sense of participation at the local level rather than just the largely unpopular figures who have been playing musical chairs in the macro politics of Moscow.

Yeltsin himself sought legitimization in this rising new cohort of political leaders when he brought in Boris Nemtsov from Nizhny Novgorod, the leading area of provincial reform, and then when he chose Nemtsov's 35-year-old protégé Sergei Kirienko to be his acting prime minister.

America has, on the whole, conveyed a general sense of sympathy and regard for the Russian people; and President Clinton has been wise in maintaining a consistently cordial relationship with Yeltsin, which has minimized their sense of embarrassment and humiliation. But simple human friendship at the top and rhetoric about partnerships for peace are not enough to break through the smoldering resentment and assertive nationalism that is increasingly dominating the Russian political agenda. Some major substantive American commitment has to be added.

What then can America do? We should, first of all, recognize that there is both a serious geopolitical necessity and a golden economic opportunity for the United States to put Russia on the front, rather than the back, burner of its policy agenda. It is clearly, in the long run, far more important that Russia have a friendly, accountable government with good prospects for the future than that Russia please us on all policy matters in the short run. Russia is unlikely to go back to a Communist regime, but an authoritarian nationalist dictatorship could pose even more serious problems for the United States than the declining Communism of the late Soviet era.

It is wrong to assume that we cannot do much simply because it would require too much federal money. Of course, to Russians and to much of the outside world, this argument seems strange at a time of prosperity in America — a prosperity brought about in no small measure by the end of the Cold War itself. The fact, however, is that government-to-government money is not what is either wanted or required. Only a scant one-and-one-half percent of the Marshall Plan was spent on bringing young Germans over after World War II to see for themselves how our kind of society works. This proved to be far more important than many of the more expensive activities of the Marshall Plan. It allowed a whole new generation of Germans not just to see for themselves how a free society works but to adapt our experience to their situation. They became interpreters and advocates within their culture on how to apply the essentials of the American model to their different society. The result in Germany has been one of the most successfully functioning federated democracies in the world. We have never made a comparable investment in bringing young Russians over to America. Up until the last few years, there were more Chinese coming every year to America than there had been Russians since World War II.

So the first step we could take which would have a practical impact in jump-starting the learning process on the functioning of an open and accountable society would be to bring over a genuinely large number of Russians – say, 25,000 in one summer – for exposure to the rich variety of institutions and regional experiences that make up our continent-wide democracy and particularly our civil society. We are still at the stages of tokenism in our exchange programs and in our largely short-term and modest economic transactions. But many of the small-scale activities by Americans have, for some time now, been working well in exchanges and in the development of a civil society. We now have plenty of proven models that could be rapidly expanded.

The key point is that bringing large numbers of Russians over here avoids the patronizing syndrome of sending Americans over there to tell them how to lead their lives. A major one-time push in this area could provide that *podvig* or imaginative, heroic deed that would indicate to the Russian people the genuine human interest of Americans and the strength that lies at the grass-roots level. There are all kinds of ways this could be organized with state governors, sister cities, and major industrial enterprises taking the lead. It would not take much expense to draft a program that could have a genuinely dramatic impact on the young generation in Russia and help diffuse their drift into a dangerous nationalist isolationism of their own.

It is very important that key younger Russians, particularly in provincial centers, have some such exposure before the all-important

parliamentary elections in 1999 and the Russian presidential election in 2000. These elections will probably set the course for Russia for years to come.

In the economic sphere, there is a tremendous need to generate some dramatic growth in the free economy, so that Russians in their current stage of early capitalist development do not continue to feel a nostalgia for the giant Soviet factories that were little more than non-productive welfare organizations, or for their collective farms that represent, in effect, a form of rural slavery. Russians would not feel the nostalgia that is increasing these days for such economically unproductive units of the Soviet era if they had some more dynamic and inspiring examples of capitalist development within their country.

As it is, Americans are investing at least ten times more money in China, which makes no pretense at building democracy, than they are in Russia, which is making efforts to do so.

What is needed is massive amounts of capital investment. There are things we could do more actively to help them develop contract law, a rational and consistent tax system, and institutions which would help protect against the kind of corruption and crime that drives away many potential investors. But, in Russia now, inflation has been checked, production is slowly rising, and the Russian stock market has been a profitable investment recently in spite of all the difficulties. I believe the time is right — and the need is great — to develop a really major investment strategy — a strategy that could at the same time address the psychological and geopolitical problems that are the most serious.

I would like to suggest, here in the heart of the North Pacific Basin, a major joint American-Russian effort to develop the world's last great economic frontier in Siberia. Siberia has great imaginative appeal as the last great repository of untouched natural resources on the earth. America has both the capital and the skills to develop it, if we are willing to make the long-term investment that would be needed.

The Library of Congress has been digitizing the treasures of America and getting them to American schools and libraries all over the country with amazing effect. We are getting the story of America back into the classroom electronically and helping to get the new audiovisually attuned generation back into thinking and reading as they seek to answer the questions that they themselves raise looking at Civil War maps and photographs, early Edison movies, political cartoons, and the writing of founding fathers in their original hand. We have proposed for the Russians – and they are enthusiastically responding – that we do a joint digitization project that would document the parallel opening of the two frontiers of European civilization, the Russian and American. Our frontiers met in Russian Alaska and even at Fort Ross, just north

of San Francisco: the farthest southern outpost of Russia's eastern reach as it met America's westward expansion at the beginning of the 19th century.

Focusing Russia's attention on its eastern frontier and its internal developmental needs would help the Russians overcome their fixation with the shrinking of their national borders and the eastward expansion of NATO. At the same time, it would fortify a country that has reasserted its religious roots and is committed to developing democracy against the incursion that most Russians themselves feel will eventually come from a China which permits neither religion nor democracy and still has irredentist claims to much of southern Siberia. A massive, American-led investment program in Siberia would show for the first time (and in a way that does not insult the Chinese) that we are going to balance our economic investments a little more in the favor of those committed to democracy.

A major national U.S. investment in Siberia would help undercut the emotional appeal of the authoritarian nationalists in Russia. They argue that they alone are fighting to preserve the pristine integrity of Russia from predatory foreign invaders and developers. Such a plan would be basically Russian, but would involve genuine bi-national or multi-national teams. There is another major argument for such a project. Siberia is not just the world's last great untouched reserve of national resources. It is also the best great untouched rainforest. If resource exploitation is totally random and rapacious, the ecological degradation could have grave consequences for the entire planet. A program of the kind I am suggesting offers what may be humanity's last chance to integrate ecological concerns with developmental ones right from the beginning.

I traveled to Siberia with a group of senators two years ago, and we found a young group of Americans and Russians working together to develop such a plan for the Baikal Lake region. The late Soviet effort to reverse the flow of rivers of Siberia and change its entire ecology, as well as the policy of dumping atomic wastes in Siberia, enraged and energized Russian conservatives to advocate breaking Russia itself away from the Soviet Union. If America would appear now, not only as a partner in economic development, but as a partner and friend in integrating from the beginning ecological considerations with developmental ones, we could set a new model for ourselves and for the world in general. It would have great imaginative appeal for the Russians, who have an almost mystical feeling for nature in general and Siberia in particular.

Massive plans are already in the files of many American companies from the spate of assertive, speculative planning that they undertook in the early 1970s, when it first looked like the Russian market might be opening up. Probably some initial government guarantees against

political risk would be needed at the outset. A small government investment could prime a very large pump. We may be developing a model in the giant petroleum project on Sakhalin Island.

A new, dynamic type of political and entrepreneurial leadership is emerging in places like Novgorod, Vologda, Samara, and Saratov. Russia is coming alive both organizationally and politically. But the combination of economic strain, social dislocation, and psychological sense of cultural humiliation will give us a continuing risk for the near future of an authoritarian takeover in Russia through any of a variety of scenarios. Whether Russia were to produce a semi-fascist authoritarianism or Yugoslav-type anarchy in the heart of Eurasia — either way the consequences would be dangerous and could be disastrous.

An authoritarian takeover could occur in any number of ways. A direct coup is unlikely, although technically possible; a creeping group, in which a whole series of almost imperceptible steps lead towards a nationalist authoritarianism, is more likely; and it is also possible that Yeltsin's chosen successor could drift into the authoritarian camp. It is very unlikely that Yeltsin himself could do so, since he is so fully identified with reform; but it is not out of the question that he could be, as one nationalist recently inadvertently put it, "our Hindenburg." Hitler came to power legally under the protective coating of an aged and inattentive Hindenburg.

The odds against any of these scenarios happening is very long, but assuming that there is a five percent chance that any one of these scenarios would take place, there are quite a number of such scenarios, so the probability that one of them may occur, or some variant thereof, becomes reasonably high. The one thing that would be certain about almost any of these scenarios for authoritarian nationalism coming into full power is that the resentment necessary to support it would be directed squarely against America. The visceral hostility in the past was toward Germany, not America, even at the height of the Cold War. We would have no excuse for having failed either to avert the danger or to realize the opportunity that lay before us with our erstwhile enemy.

Surely, it would be a glorious thing to close the book on the last great conflict of this second millennium by a major gesture which would, in fact, be a good investment. It could make possible the emergence in the other half of the northern hemisphere of a new land that could be – that wants to be – very much like our own. Together, the G-7 nations and Russia would provide an example as well as a reassurance to the rest of the world that a more responsibly cooperative model of international activity is being crafted for the coming millennium.

It is true that Russia can hardly seriously harm its neighbors with its depleted military, but they still have weapons of mass destruction that

could destroy us, either directly or through proxies. Russia is still a very large powder keg, and it is dangerous to have so much material smoldering in its proximity. It is irresponsible not to realize that a relatively small investment on our part now could forestall any of these scenarios from setting it off.

There is an old Siberian folktale which I am fond of recounting. The bear was originally a human being, the story tells us, but when he came out of the forest, he was denied the bread and salt of hospitality by the human community. As a result, he retreated back into the forest, traded his human identity for an animal one, and came back out of the forest to the village to take his revenge.

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DISCUSSION

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Additional remarks made by Dr. Billington in response to issues raised after the formal lecture.

If Gorbachev Had Stayed in Power . . .

Russia would be in much worse shape than it is today – not because Gorbachev wasn't a good man. The world owes him a great deal. But in his last year, he was moving in a very conservative direction, and then he hedged a little at the last minute. That's when the coup struck.

At that time, you had two imperfect transitional figures. But, for all his weaknesses, Yeltsin has the capacity to connect with the people. As Nixon said, and it was a very keen analysis in his last year, "Gorbachev is Wall Street; Yeltsin is Main Street." On the big things, Yeltsin can rally the Russian people. I believe that the resistance would not have happened if Yeltsin hadn't stood up on a tank. That's not something Gorbachev could have done; Gorbachev would have had a committee meeting.

In the last election, Gorbachev got less than one percent of the vote. It is sad, because this is a great historic figure who did wonderful things. Yet, he was not able to handle the next phase, so one way or another, Russia would have been worse off, I'm afraid.

The Impact of President Reagan's Policies on the Demise of the Soviet Union

I don't think the effect of Reagan's policies was to starve the Russian people. People were not starving to death in the late Soviet Union. It was not Reagan's policy (nor was it the result) that the people starved. The manipulative power structure needed to be shaken up a little bit. I think both the Strategic Defense Initiative and the "Evil Empire" speech were rather effective. Paradoxically, they were effective because they did not come from a lot of publications and discussions. They came from a leader who took a position.

The Jackson-Vanik Bill violated some of the laws of traditional linkage and diplomacy; but that's why, in my view, it was effective. I think a new generation of people in Russia itself is beginning to see that

when you are dealing with extraordinary power, exercised in unusual ways, you have to deal with it in unusual ways. In the writing of the history of the Cold War, I suspect that that kind of improvisation will be much more positively evaluated in the future than it has been up until now.

America's Political Will

Foreign policy was barely mentioned in the last presidential election, and many people have taken that to mean it is not on anybody's mind. I really don't think that's the case. When we take people to Russia, for example, they get very excited by what they see. The weakest link in the U.S. is the short-sightedness of our investment and our international business priorities. People mistake short-term stability for long-term opportunity, so the kind of strategy that would be needed for long-term development exists only in the planning files.

The question is, do we have a rationale for engaging in the world at all, or are we just going to respond to crises? There is a growing realization among the American people that we are involved in a global marketplace, but the connection hasn't been made with any major policy initiative. In my view, we have to be more engaged in the world and not just preoccupied with the performance of the stock market in the next quarter. We have to think about where the American economy is going and where the real sources of wealth and development will be during the next decade or so.

The Effect of NATO Expansion in Russia

In terms of its effect on Russia, it is clearly negative. Yet the larger policy question is whether NATO expansion is part of a broader equation where you have other obligations and other concerns. Once you have made a commitment, if you don't follow through on it, that can have a harmful impact on all kinds of other things the country is trying to do. The point I would make now is that if you can't change the policy, at least change the subject. What I was trying to suggest this evening is that a Siberian development program is a way of changing the subject. Psychologically, the expansion of NATO has a discouraging effect on our friends over there and has made it difficult for reformers. The one thing that you can state pretty definitively is that, in the absence of anything new and positive, the expansion of NATO accelerates the negative trends I've been talking about.

Why Communists Continue to Be Important in Modern Russia

First of all, they are important because they have the only organized national political party. The reform movement has never organized into an effective national political party. Secondly, because of the chaos and confusion, a lot of people, including intellectuals, are finding they like security. The Red/Brown movement has a surprisingly large number of cultural figures who always wanted freedom; but, when they finally got it and yet lost their state subsidy, they were not so sure it was a good trade. So you have a whole host of people developing nostalgia for – of all things – the Brezhnev era, because at least they were secure. You didn't have to work too hard to get a paycheck. You know: we pretend to work; they pretend to pay us. It's not a very demanding system.

Ukraine is a different situation. Poland is even more different. There you have a case where the Communists have changed much more than they have in Russia. In Poland, for instance, there is little nostalgia for Communism because the Communists themselves have changed. They really seem to have become social democrats.

The Communists in Russia still haven't crossed that psychic barrier yet, and therefore, they are a menace – a political menace – because they are allied with the extreme nationalists. Zyuganov was pretending he was the great defender of Russian tradition, and getting away with it, because the reform movement has trouble running the central state and cannot point to anything big and dramatic that the new politicians have brought to Russia. I think it is that, as much as the party's organizational strength, which accounts for the nostalgia, the continuing appeal of the Russian Communists as people who can somehow recapture, together with the nationalists, some of the respect Russia had in the good old days. And that thinking, unfortunately, is gaining strength.

How Bringing Russians to the United States Could Bolster the Russian Economy and the Development of a Civic Society

You need to bring over the new leadership cohort, the people of ambition with a certain level of achievement at an early stage in their lives, and you need to make sure they are going to go back to Russia to share what they have learned.

The best thing would be to do it on a regional basis but to have a lot of enterprises involved – a university, secondary school, churches. There is a major religious revival going on in Russia. The new law restricting religions with foreign connections is potentially very harmful because it affects not just the churches, but also the whole development

of a civil society. With the macro structures crumbling in Russia, people are improvising at the local level. The Russian Orthodox Church and other churches are developing parish structures that assume a lot of the burden for education, health, hospice care – things that have never been well taken care of by centralized government.

There are a lot of developing institutions for which there are interesting American parallels. The trick is to find the emerging leaders. The political process has been functioning long enough by now that there is an identifiable cohort of those who are assuming responsibility.

We have tiny visitor programs that bring over only a few emerging leaders. If you bring over a lot of people, you jump-start the process of learning in time to affect the next election. You provide them with some kind of experience. It doesn't really matter what it is. They'll find things out you didn't expect or even intend. We ourselves don't know what is relevant to these countries. We know that institutions of our country work, and the Russians know they work. But they can't quite believe it will ever work there. That has got to be their discovery.

You cannot solve the political problems until there is a cohort of people who really believe a free society can work in the kind of complicated way that we know it does. It took us a few hundred years to work it out; the Russians are trying to work it out in a very short space of time. They are very quick learners. But we haven't helped them jump-start the process.

What Influence Solzhenitsyn Could Have in Russia

I wanted to interview Solzhenitsyn for a PBS television series to be aired in June. I knew him somewhat and, for a Westerner, have reasonably good relations with him. When I approached him, he seemed to be in some kind of deep depression. He just didn't want to be interviewed.

Solzhenitsyn probably could have been a presidential candidate, but he's retreating. He could have been head of a responsible conservative nationalism. I think Solzhenitsyn had a certain vision of what was going to happen in Russia, and it didn't seem to be happening. I think he thought there would be a kind of spiritual resurrection of the Slavic people – the Ukrainians and the Belarussians – that they would all come together again.

When he went back to Russia, he saw an influx of the worst forms of Western influence, and he instinctively knows they are not the best we have to offer. He sees it destroying not just the old Soviet system, but also the Russian people themselves. In that sense, he represents a lot of this malaise I've been talking about.

He has a few dark corners of his mind, but he's the kind of man who would come out of it if we were to have a Siberian development program of the kind I'm talking about, one that really cared about ecological as well as economic development. A lot of people who are now conservatives don't want to have a fascist Russia, but they don't see the market producing anything of authentic moral and spiritual worth. If the Russians had a sense that they could develop in a wholesome way and that the forces of capitalism were identified with that kind of growth, it would change the whole political equation.

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